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News Release

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Man sentenced for bank fraud, conspiracy, identity theft

A 43-year-old man was sentenced today in federal court in connection with a scheme to defraud financial institutions and obtain between \$70,000 and \$120,000 under fraudulent pretenses. In St. Paul, United States District Court Judge Donovan Frank sentenced Donald Alexander Steele, Jr., unknown address, to 120 months in federal prison on one count of bank fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft. Steele was indicted on June 9, 2008, and pleaded guilty on April 6, 2009.

In his plea agreement, Steele admitted that between February 15 and September 15, 2007, he conspired to steal mail, obtain from that mail the financial information of others, and use that information to make counterfeit checks. In addition, Steele admitted presenting those counterfeit checks to merchants and banks in an effort to obtain merchandise and cash.

Specifically, on May 18, 2007, Steele obtained the personal banking information of a U.S. Bank customer, created a fraudulent check from that information, and presented the check to an automotive store in exchange for merchandise.

Steele also admitted that on May 10, 2007, he obtained the date of birth of an individual and used that information to apply for a credit card in that person's name. Upon receipt of the card, he presented it to merchants to acquire items of value exceeding \$1,000 within a one-year period.

The estimated total loss due to Steele's criminal activity is between \$70,000 and \$120,000. The case was the result of an investigation by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Minnesota Financial Crimes Task Force.